

9. Can I lease public lands for timber, grazing, or a vacation home? No—except in unusual circumstances. Public land timber is sold at auction to the highest bidder after careful planning to protect the environment. All National Resource Lands suitable for grazing are already leased or allotted under long-term permit; you would have to acquire a present rancher's privately owned base property to assume the privileges which go with that property. Leases for vacation sites are no longer offered by the Bureau of Land Management. The U. S. Forest Service, which manages the National Forests, has leased private vacation sites in the past but does not plan any more such recreational developments.

10. As a veteran, do I have special privileges regarding public lands? No. While your status as a veteran entitles you to many benefits under programs administered by the Veterans Administration, there are no special benefits regarding public lands except certain reductions in the requirements for length of residence on homesteads. Since any homesteading is all but impossible, these benefits have no practical value.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Surplus Federal Real Estate is handled by the Property Manage-

ment and Disposal Service, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. 20405. Sales are held by GSA regional offices in Boston, New York, Washington, Atlanta, Chicago, Kansas City, Fort Worth, Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle.

National Resource Lands are administered by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, with State offices in Anchorage, Phoenix, Sacramento, Denver, Boise, Billings, Reno, Santa Fe, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Cheyenne. Quarterly lists of lands for sale are published in *Our Public Lands*; to subscribe, send \$2.00 to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Public Land Information Bulletins are also available from the Superintendent of Documents, with detailed information. Bulletins should be ordered by number:

1. *What Are the "Public Lands?"*
(25 cents)
2. *What About Lands in Alaska?*
(20 cents)
3. *Camping on the Public Lands*
(20 cents)
4. *How to Buy Public Lands*
(25 cents)



10 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management
February 1973

HD
221
.T46
1973

10 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT PUBLIC LANDS

This leaflet is intended to give you brief answers to 10 of the most frequent questions about Federally owned lands. If you need more information, please ask for one or more of the information bulletins listed on the last page.

1. *Can I get free land from the U.S. Government?* No. Public lands—now called the National Resource Lands—have never been free for the asking. The public land laws which once allowed citizens to earn land by developing it have now become obsolete.

2. *Can I still homestead on public land?* No. The old Homestead Act of 1862 is still on the books, but suitable land for farming has long since been settled or set aside for other purposes. Homesteading meant you had to locate vacant public land, claim it and then farm the land for 5 years before you could get clear title. The land that's left is unfit for farming. The rules for homesteading were less rigid in Alaska, but nearly all lands which could have been settled in Alaska have been transferred to the State or are held for Native entitlements.

3. *Can I get a land grant from the Federal Government?* No. Land grants to individual citizens ended in the 1840's; mostly these were payments for military service. Federal lands have been granted to States, colleges, and railroads, but laws do not permit the granting of Federal lands to any citizen, no matter how worthwhile his intended purpose may be.

4. *Can I buy public land for \$1.25 or \$3.50 an acre?* No. And any company that advertises that it can tell you how to buy lands at these prices is misinforming you. All sales of National Resource Lands to individuals are at public auction, based on appraised fair market value, and recently have been averaging about \$75.00 an acre. Some lands are sold at lower prices because they are worth less on the market; often such "bargains" have no legal access and no water.

5. *Will you send me a list of public lands for sale?* No. It would be impractical to try to keep a current listing of all tracts of National Resource Lands for sale in all parts of the country. You can get a quarterly list by subscribing to *Our Public Lands*, the official magazine of the Bureau of Land Management. See addresses on the last page.

6. *Does the U.S. Government sell tax lands?* No. So-called tax lands are properties which have been taken over by local governments because the owners failed to pay local taxes. You will have to contact the local government, usually the county tax collector's office, for information about these lands. Opportunities for bargains are rare today.

7. *Can I buy public lands in the East, South, or Midwest?* No. There never were any Federal public lands in the Original Thirteen Colonies, nor in Texas or Hawaii. The few remaining acres in the other States east of the Rockies are tied up with claims or other encumbrances and it is very unlikely that any tracts will ever be placed on the open market. State and local governments get first chance on such lands, for public purposes.

8. *Do squatters have rights?* No. Squatters earn no rights. While camping is permitted on almost all National Resource Lands and is encouraged at designated recreation areas, any attempt to set up a permanent residence is illegal and the squatter is subject to trespass penalties in addition to loss of buildings and other improvements.